

**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW
OF
CARLOS SOSA**

**25 PAGES
(INCLUDING COVER)**

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

 In the Matter of: *
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 FIRE ON BOARD THE *
 U.S. PASSENGER VESSEL *
 PORT IMPERIAL MANHATTAN *
 NOVEMBER 17, 2000 *

Monday,
 November 20, 2000

INTERVIEW OF:

CARLOS SOSA

This interview was conducted by Donald J. Tyrrell,
 Investigator-in-Charge, National Transportation Safety Board,
 Office of Marine Safety, 490 L'Enfant Plaza East, Washington,
 D.C. 20594.

Other Persons Present

In addition to the person being interviewed, the following
 individuals were also present during the interview:

Name	Representing	Address	Telephone
Peter Johansen	NY Waterway	Senior Director of Marine Operations NY Waterway Pershing Road Weehawken, N.J. 07087	201-902-8841
James Silecchia	NY Waterway	Port Engineer NY Watersay Pershing Road Weehawken, N.J. 07087	201-902-8815
William A. Wood	NY Waterway	Seaworthy Systems, Inc. 800 Cooper Road Voorhees, N.J. 08043	856-751-4270

Don Ricciuti	NY Waterway	Seaworthy Systems, Inc. P.O. Box 965 Essex, CT 06426	860-767-9061
Lt. Daniel J. Fitzgerald	USCG	Activities New York 212 Coast Guard Drive Staten Island, NY 10305	718-354-4230
Petty Officer Fred Taylor	USCG	Activities New York 212 Coast Guard Drive Staten Island, NY 10305	718-354-4230

1 PROCEEDINGS

2 MR. TYRRELL: For the record I am talking to
3 Mr. Carlos Sosa. It is Monday, November 20th and the
4 time is 2:25 p.m.

5 Carlos, I will ask you some background
6 questions first.

7 Can you tell me your age?

8 MR. SOSA: Twenty seven.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Twenty seven.

10 Okay. And you are currently employed as a
11 deckhand on the Manhattan?

12 MR. SOSA: Yes, sir.

13 MR. TYRRELL: And how long have you been a
14 deckhand on the Manhattan?

15 MR. SOSA: We don't sail on the boat, you
16 know, the same boat all the time. So, last week was my
17 first week there.

18 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. How long have you been a
19 deckhand working for the New York Waterways?

20 MR. SOSA: About a year and a half.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Year and a half.

22 Okay. Did you work as a deckhand on other
23 vessels before that?

24 MR. SOSA: No, sir, that was my first one.

25 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. So, all of your marine

1 experience has been with New York Waterways?

2 MR. SOSA: Yes.

3 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Have you had any special
4 training, go to any marine schools or anything like
5 that?

6 MR. SOSA: No. I mean, just the training that
7 they give in the company.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. What kind of training
9 did they give you in the company?

10 MR. SOSA: You know, fire drills, abandon
11 ships, man overboard, you know, the ones that the Coast
12 Guard asks, you know, the ones required by the Coast
13 Guard.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. So, there are onboard
15 fire drills, abandon ships drills and what was the
16 other one?

17 MR. SOSA: Man overboard.

18 MR. TYRRELL: Man overboard drills.

19 MR. SOSA: Yes.

20 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. How often do you hold
21 them?

22 MR. SOSA: At least once a month.

23 MR. TYRRELL: Once a month.

24 MR. SOSA: Yes, I mean, we do it like one of
25 each.

1 MR. TYRRELL: When you do the drills, do you
2 do all three at, one after the other?

3 MR. SOSA: No. They say we can do, one week
4 we can, suppose to be doing the man overboard drill,
5 and then maybe the next week or the week after we do
6 the other one and then, but we never have them like,
7 you know, all together.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. But, in a month's time
9 you would have done each one of them?

10 MR. SOSA: At least two of them. I mean, the
11 ones that we usually, like we usually do is man
12 overboard and fire drills.

13 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

14 MR. SOSA: Abandon ships rarely.

15 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. What would a typical
16 fire drill be like?

17 MR. SOSA: Fire drill?

18 MR. TYRRELL: Yes.

19 MR. SOSA: Well, we, I basically know, you
20 know, where the fire extinguishers are, I mean, that is
21 one thing that we have to look every time we come on
22 the boat, where the fire extinguishers are, the hoses.
23 And then we go to the engine room and check the, you
24 know, the valves, how they are suppose to be open and
25 all of that. We are suppose to -- And then, you know,

1 once we have like everything set up, we go with the
2 Captain, you know, checking all of this, all the
3 gauges, you know, I mean all the valves and all, and
4 the switches that we have to turn on. And once we
5 have, you know, the fire pump running, and we have got
6 everything set, then we go to the deck, and we fire
7 drill, and we use the fire hose.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Okay. What would be,
9 what would be an abandoned ship drill, what would that
10 be like?

11 MR. SOSA: In theory, it would be, you know,
12 the first thing we do, you know, we get all the
13 passengers lined around the boat, you know, like
14 outside the cabin, stuff like that. And the we get the
15 rafts, throw them in the water, and then transfer the
16 passengers --

17 MR. TYRRELL: Well, what would the drill be
18 like? I mean, how do you, how would you practice this,
19 or what do you do for abandoned, what do you actually
20 do for abandoned ship drill?

21 MR. SOSA: Basically, I mean, we have done
22 those, I mean, the only time I have done like on an
23 abandoned ship was when we had a Coast Guard
24 inspection. I always, I had to work the -- at that
25 time, they asked me, you know, you know, what we were

1 suppose to do in case we had to abandoned the ship.

2 And we just told them that.

3 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

4 MR. SOSA: We haven't actually --

5 MR. TYRRELL: It is like a quiz rather than
6 actually, going through any kind of evolution or taking
7 any kind of action.

8 MR. SOSA: Yes, doing for that I guess we
9 would have to have people.

10 MR. TYRRELL: Yes, okay. And the man
11 overboard drill, what do you do with that?

12 MR. SOSA: Man overboard drill, we, I have
13 done different, I mean, usually when we go with the
14 captain, when we are, let's say coming, going to, like,
15 you know, start our shift or when we are coming back,
16 he will usually just throw a life jacket in the water,
17 without telling us, then we have to see that life
18 jacket going overboard. One of the deckhands goes up,
19 tells the captain, you know, that we have a man
20 overboard drill, and he stays with the captain,
21 pointing, you know, where the person is. And while
22 that person is doing that, the other guy that stays on
23 deck, gets a life preserver, throws, you know, throws
24 the ring to the person. Gets the life raft ready, and
25 once the captain has the person in sight, and goes on

1 the deck, and you know, he has got the person and
2 everything, the other guy goes down, or actually stays
3 up and help the other guy bring the ladder down, put
4 the ladder in place, and will secure the ladder to one
5 of the railings. Go down the ladder, one of the
6 deckhands, while the other one stays on top, and you
7 know, it is indicating the captain to go forward or
8 backward or like once he is not able to see the person.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

10 MR. SOSA: Bring the person on deck and, you
11 know, just check the person.

12 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. So, you are going to
13 retrieve the life jacket from the water.

14 MR. SOSA: We retrieve it, yes.

15 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. What time did you start
16 work on the day of the fire started?

17 MR. SOSA: It was like 2:20, something like
18 that.

19 MR. TYRRELL: Two, twenty. P.m?

20 MR. SOSA: P.m., yes. Because I took
21 the midtown boat to --

22 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. What are your normal
23 duties when you, you know, what do you do on a normal
24 day?

25 MR. SOSA: On a normal day?

1 MR. TYRRELL: Yes.

2 MR. SOSA: Besides, you know, checking how
3 many passengers get onboard, making sure that everybody
4 has arrived. We do engine room checks, you know, like
5 every, I don't know, 45 to an hour.

6 MR. TYRRELL: I am sorry?

7 MR. SOSA: Every 45 minutes to an hour. I
8 mean, we do it every so often, like, you know, we take
9 turns, you know, sometimes I go and sometimes the other
10 deckhand goes.

11 MR. TYRRELL: I see.

12 MR. SOSA: And basically that is it, just
13 making sure that everything is all right.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. When you get a passenger
15 count, what do you do with that information? What do
16 you do --

17 MR. SOSA: We write it down on a sheet, on a
18 count sheet that we have.

19 MR. TYRRELL: Is it reported ashore or
20 anything like that?

21 MR. SOSA: Yes, at the end of the night, we
22 are suppose to drop it in the box --

23 MR. TYRRELL: Okay, at the end of the night.

24 MR. SOSA: Yes.

25 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Could you think back now

1 to where you were when you first discovered that there
2 was a problem on the day that the fire started and what
3 you were doing, and just tell me, take me through what
4 happened from the time you first realized that there
5 was a problem, until you got off the boat?

6 MR. SOSA: We had just left 38th Street. And
7 I guess we were at -- I am not sure. We left the dock,
8 the boat was spinning around, you know, around.
9 Felipe, the other deckhand went up, you know, went to
10 the top deck, I sat in the lower deck. I was writing
11 down the, you know, how many passengers got on the
12 boat, and I was basically there just on the stern of
13 the boat, on the starboard side, just, you know,
14 looking at everybody. You know, just go to the left,
15 and I remember going out of, passing, you know, Pier
16 78, which is on -- and Felipe came in and told me, he
17 just said, engine room. Since I was on the upper side
18 of the boat, I just went around the stern. I was, I
19 was standing here, the door was on this side, so I just
20 went around it, and Felipe got to the door, he opened
21 the door, and when he opened it he got like an electric
22 shock.

23 MR. TYRRELL: Which door is this?

24 MR. SOSA: The engine room door.

25 MR. TYRRELL: From the main cabin into the

1 engine room?

2 MR. SOSA: From the main cabin. Yeah, because
3 if you saw the boat, you know, it has a line of
4 bleachers in the middle, so, at the end where we have
5 the engine room door, it is like a little -- like a
6 box, so I was sitting on the starboard side and I just
7 went, around it, you know, to the door, and as he
8 opened the door, where he touched the, you know, the
9 door, he got like an electric shock. And he just, you
10 know, kind of kept on getting it every time, because
11 the door was like swinging back and forth, so, every
12 time he would make contact with it, you know, he got an
13 electric shock. So, when we opened the door we saw the
14 flames coming out. And we had a fire extinguisher, you
15 know, just behind the, the wall.

16 MR. TYRRELL: Inside the doorway?

17 MR. SOSA: Yeah, inside, like, you know, the
18 bleachers are here, here is the walls like for the
19 engine room, and right back here we have the fire
20 extinguisher, you know, on the stern.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Would you draw me a little
22 sketch?

23 MR. SOSA: Sure.

24 (Pause.)

25 MR. SOSA: This is the bleachers, this is the

1 wheel house, I mean, the engine room, the door is here.
2 The fire extinguisher here, I was standing on this
3 side.

4 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

5 MR. SOSA: All right.

6 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Continue.

7 MR. SOSA: All right. So, then I handed it to
8 Felipe, and he started, you know, spraying the, we saw
9 the flames, and there was a lot of smoke coming out, so
10 we didn't actually at that one point, know where the
11 fire was coming from. So, he sprayed some, I guess,
12 the air or something, clear something and realized that
13 the fire was coming from underneath, so, we are
14 standing here, where it was coming from, you know, from
15 the engine room, but from this side. And he just kept
16 on spraying and spraying.

17 MR. TYRRELL: The fire was coming from the
18 port side.

19 MR. SOSA: From the port side, yes.

20 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

21 MR. SOSA: But, you know --

22 MR. TYRRELL: You couldn't reach it --

23 MR. SOSA: We didn't know exactly, like we
24 couldn't go down to the engine room to see where the
25 fire was coming from, because the flames were coming

1 from, you know, between the steps.

2 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

3 MR. SOSA: So, I saw we couldn't do anything
4 because we didn't know where the fire was coming from
5 and we couldn't down because the flames were too high.

6 So, then I ran, I left Felipe there and I went up to
7 the wheel house and told, and I told the Captain that,
8 you know, we had fire and that there was, that we
9 couldn't control it and I was going to cut the fuel
10 shut off. So, then I --

11 MR. TYRRELL: Where is the fuel shut off
12 located?

13 MR. SOSA: It is, the bleachers are here, we
14 have a rail, you know, like railings, and there is a
15 fire station here.

16 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

17 MR. SOSA: I saw underneath the fire station
18 was the fuel shut off, a little box over here.

19 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. You just pull it?

20 MR. SOSA: Yeah, you just pull it.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

22 MR. SOSA: So, I pulled it, and then went to
23 back to Felipe, and he had finished the fire
24 extinguisher. He finished the whole thing. And then I
25 went to get the one we had on the bow of the boat. We

1 had another one. I went to get it, and Felipe was
2 starting like, like he, we had people standing like
3 inside the cabin, but in the front of the boat -- like
4 that. Not exactly on the bow, so Felipe said,
5 "Everybody to the bow." And when I went back, I just
6 started spraying, and spraying. I don't know, like
7 Felipe and --

8 After that, I remember that I was trying to
9 make the hose go, you know, behind the steps, so it
10 would go do something back there, right. So, I was
11 kind of bending down and spraying and then when I stood
12 up, I saw, you know, there was a lot of smoke inside
13 the cabin, and then the Captain came in and you know,
14 he saw the fire, and all that. And then he grabbed
15 some life jackets, and I just, I saw somebody like on
16 my left side, getting on the -- So, I saw the life
17 jackets. He went outside and then there was a lot of
18 smoke in the cabin and I remember going to the stern
19 door which was closed at that time, and I opened it and
20 let, I got a line that we have on one of the vents,
21 just a little --

22 MR. TYRRELL: To get the smoke out?

23 MR. SOSA: To get the smoke out of the cabin,
24 yes. Then I came back inside, and again I kept on
25 spraying but at that moment I saw the flames were, you

1 know, you know, got bigger and stuff like that, so, I
2 couldn't do anything. And then I brought the fire
3 extinguishers, because I had them in front of the door,
4 and I brought them to the back, by the door, by the
5 stern door. When the Captain came inside, he started
6 yelling, asking for me, I told him that I was in the
7 stern and then he told me to get out there. I came out
8 of the starboard side of the boat, because you know,
9 there was -- coming out. When I got to the bow, I saw
10 the passengers standing on the bow. Some of them had,
11 you know, their life jackets on. There were a few that
12 didn't have them on, so, I helped them to put the life
13 jackets on. There was another guy that had a life
14 jacket, a child life jacket on, and at that moment,
15 like I didn't check around if they had any others, so
16 what I did I just carried my float coat-- so I put the
17 float coat on the passenger, and then the Captain told
18 me we were going to bring the rafts down. So, I went
19 and talked with the wheel house and the Captain, you
20 know, taking the rafts out.

21 We got the first one out, and then we had it
22 on the, you know --

23 MR. TYRRELL: You had it where?

24 MR. SOSA: On top of the, on top of the wheel
25 house.

1 MR. TYRRELL: Yes.

2 MR. SOSA: So, we had to push it down, but
3 there was, Felipe was by himself down there, so, the
4 Captain went down, and I pushed it and when I pushed
5 the first one, one of the passengers offered to help
6 us, the one I gave the float coat to, he came on top
7 and he helped me to get, you know, the other two rafts
8 down.

9 Once we got them down, you know, we went, all
10 of us went to the bow. They had one already in the
11 water and the other two were on the bow of the deck.
12 And then, Felipe and I went up to the steps, the front
13 steps and we got the ladder in place in case we had to,
14 you know, abandon the ship and where everybody wouldn't
15 have to jump in the water, but just go down the ladder,
16 to get on the boat. And that is, we saw the boat
17 coming, so we pulled the ladder out toward and we just
18 --

19 MR. TYRRELL: You what?

20 MR. SOSA: The other boat got us out of there.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. When you went forward,
22 did you say you went out on the outside of the boat?

23 MR. SOSA: No, no, inside the cabin but on the
24 starboard side.

25 MR. TYRRELL: On the starboard side.

1 MR. SOSA: Yes.

2 MR. TYRRELL: Oh, okay.

3 MR. SOSA: I mean, I didn't pass in front of
4 the wheel --

5 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. By that time were all
6 the passengers were out?

7 MR. SOSA: Yes, nobody was inside the cabin.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

9 MR. SOSA: I mean, by the time Felipe went,
10 like by the time I came back, I came with the fire
11 extinguisher.

12 MR. TYRRELL: These fire extinguishers were
13 they CO2, a dry chemical or what?

14 MR. SOSA: It was a dry chemical, yes.

15 MR. TYRRELL: Both of them?

16 MR. SOSA: As I remember, you know --

17 MR. TYRRELL: It was a powder?

18 MR. SOSA: Yes.

19 MR. TYRRELL: Both of them?

20 MR. SOSA: Yes.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

22 MR. SOSA: The other thing that I saw every
23 time was spray, just like, you could see sparks were
24 coming out.

25 MR. TYRRELL: You could see sparks?

1 MR. SOSA: Yes, sparks.

2 MR. TYRRELL: Where did you see them?

3 MR. SOSA: Like, from the dust that was coming
4 out?

5 MR. TYRRELL: From the what?

6 MR. SOSA: Dust or powder.

7 MR. TYRRELL: Oh, this was coming out of the
8 fire extinguisher, you are talking about?

9 MR. SOSA: No, when he went into the wheel
10 house, I guess, I don't know, I just remember seeing
11 sparks going, when I was spraying, I guess when the,
12 the dust made contact inside with something, I saw
13 sparks.

14 MR. TYRRELL: You saw sparks.

15 MR. SOSA: I don't know what they were.

16 MR. TYRRELL: You saw, when you sprayed the
17 fire extinguisher into the engine room, and it hit
18 something, you saw sparks. Okay

19 MR. SOSA: It might have been just --

20 MR. TYRRELL: It might have been what?

21 MR. SOSA: The chemicals.

22 MR. TYRRELL: How were the passengers? Did
23 they seem to be very upset?

24 MR. SOSA: Everybody were on their cell phone.
25 They were calling people and telling them that, you

1 know, the boat was having problems and stuff like that.

2 And they seemed calm, you know.

3 MR. TYRRELL: They seemed calm.

4 MR. SOSA: Yes, and nobody, everybody was
5 okay.

6 MR. TYRRELL: Did you hear any kind of a loud
7 noise or anything?

8 MR. SOSA: Right, before we were taken to the
9 other boat, I, we heard an explosion in the back.

10 MR. TYRRELL: Yes, before the other boat came.

11 MR. SOSA: Yes.

12 MR. TYRRELL: Do you have any idea what that
13 was?

14 MR. SOSA: From I saw, you know, the day
15 after, I went in there with the Coast Guard, we saw one
16 of the fire extinguishers split in half. So, I don't
17 know if it was that or what. Because there was one
18 tank that was in, I guess, that was the first one, I
19 guess and Felipe and that was empty. And I guess the
20 one that I was using still had some in it, one of them
21 was in tact and the other one was split in half.

22 MR. TYRRELL: Were you, did you receive any
23 kind of injuries in the fire?

24 MR. SOSA: No.

25 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Just smoke.

1 MR. SOSA: Smoke, yes.

2 MR. TYRRELL: Were you given any kind of
3 medical treatment for smoke inhalation?

4 MR. SOSA: We got, when we got here, they took
5 us to Palisades Medical Center, and on the way there,
6 when we got in the ambulance they gave us oxygen.

7 MR. TYRRELL: Oxygen.

8 MR. SOSA: Yes, so, yeah, we did.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Did they give you any
10 kind of, did they prescribe any medicine or --

11 MR. SOSA: No.

12 MR. TYRRELL: Did they want to come back and
13 look at you at any time, anything like that?

14 MR. SOSA: No, the doctors, they checked, you
15 know, they checked everybody out, and I guess we didn't
16 need anything.

17 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Is there anything else
18 you would like to tell me about the fire that I didn't
19 ask you?

20 MR. SOSA: Basically, no, I told you.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Do you have any idea what might
22 caused the fire?

23 MR. SOSA: Caused it? I don't know, I, we
24 thought it was an electrical, something related to that
25 because, you know, for the fact that they opened the

1 door and we got shocks like that. So, I don't know.

2 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

3 MR. SOSA: And you know before that we had
4 been going down inside and everything seemed normal.

5 MR. TYRRELL: How long before the fire was the
6 last time you were in the engine room?

7 MR. SOSA: Me? I could have been there at
8 5:52.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Five, fifty two, so about an
10 hour before the fire.

11 MR. SOSA: Yes, something like that. Because,
12 you know, usually we do the checks going back from New
13 York, New Jersey, because that is when we have the
14 least amount of passengers. So, when people seeing you
15 going down to the engine room and all of that, they
16 will get like, you know, I don't know, I guess.

17 MR. TYRRELL: A little concerned about it.

18 MR. SOSA: Concerned, yes. So, we usually
19 just go when we have, you know, not that many
20 passengers.

21 MR. TYRRELL: When you go into the engine room
22 and take a look around, what do you check?

23 MR. SOSA: We check the gauges, you know.

24 MR. TYRRELL: On the main engines?

25 MR. SOSA: On the main, yes, the main engines,

1 you know, basically we check levels and stuff like that
2 and then we just go around see if, you know, we have
3 any leaks or anything that might -- And that is it.

4 MR. TYRRELL: And the last time you were there
5 everything looked normal?

6 MR. SOSA: Yes, everything looked normal.

7 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Thank you very much.

8 MR. SOSA: You are welcome. That is it?

9 MR. TYRRELL: That is it. Unless somebody
10 else has some questions. Okay. Thank you.

11 MR. SOSA: You are welcome.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have --

13 MR. TYRRELL: Oh, okay.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did you feel the shock?

15 MR. SOSA: Oh, yes, yes, I felt, I remember
16 that, I told you it was the door, right. Of course
17 when I was, when I got the tank, and I was spraying I
18 noticed that every time I, the door touched me or
19 something, I felt the shock. So, what I did

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Little shock, big
21 shock?

22 MR. SOSA: It was just, I don't know, like you
23 feel very, open one of those lighters, you know, that
24 have the spark, and if you, you know, you feel just a
25 little shock. It is not like a big one.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. What kind of
2 shoes did you have on?

3 MR. SOSA: These shoes.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Rubber sole shoes.

5 MR. SOSA: And that, you know, just leave the
6 door open, and what I did was put two life jackets just
7 to hold it.

8 MR. TYRRELL: You put two life jackets --

9 MR. SOSA: Because there is a pole.

10 MR. TYRRELL: Whereabouts?

11 MR. SOSA: There is a pole over here. So, the
12 door swing this way.

13 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

14 MR. SOSA: So, I put the two life jackets
15 within the door just so to make it stay open.

16 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And it was like that
17 when you left, when you went up?

18 MR. SOSA: Yeah. I couldn't come back this
19 way, when I put the fire extinguisher in the back, I
20 couldn't come this way, you know.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

22 MR. SOSA: And I --

23 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: When did the lights go
25 out?

1 MR. SOSA: It was about a minute after I shut
2 the fuel off.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You felt the shocks
4 when the lights were on?

5 MR. SOSA: Yes. Because there was, I guess
6 there was a --

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (inaudible.)

8 MR. SOSA: I wasn't on the front deck, but, I
9 guess Felipe tried to do it, but there was a lot of
10 smoke coming out it and you have to unscrew those
11 things. Like I mean they tried to as far as I know.

12 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Well, thank you very
13 much.

14 MR. SOSA: Thank you.

15 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)